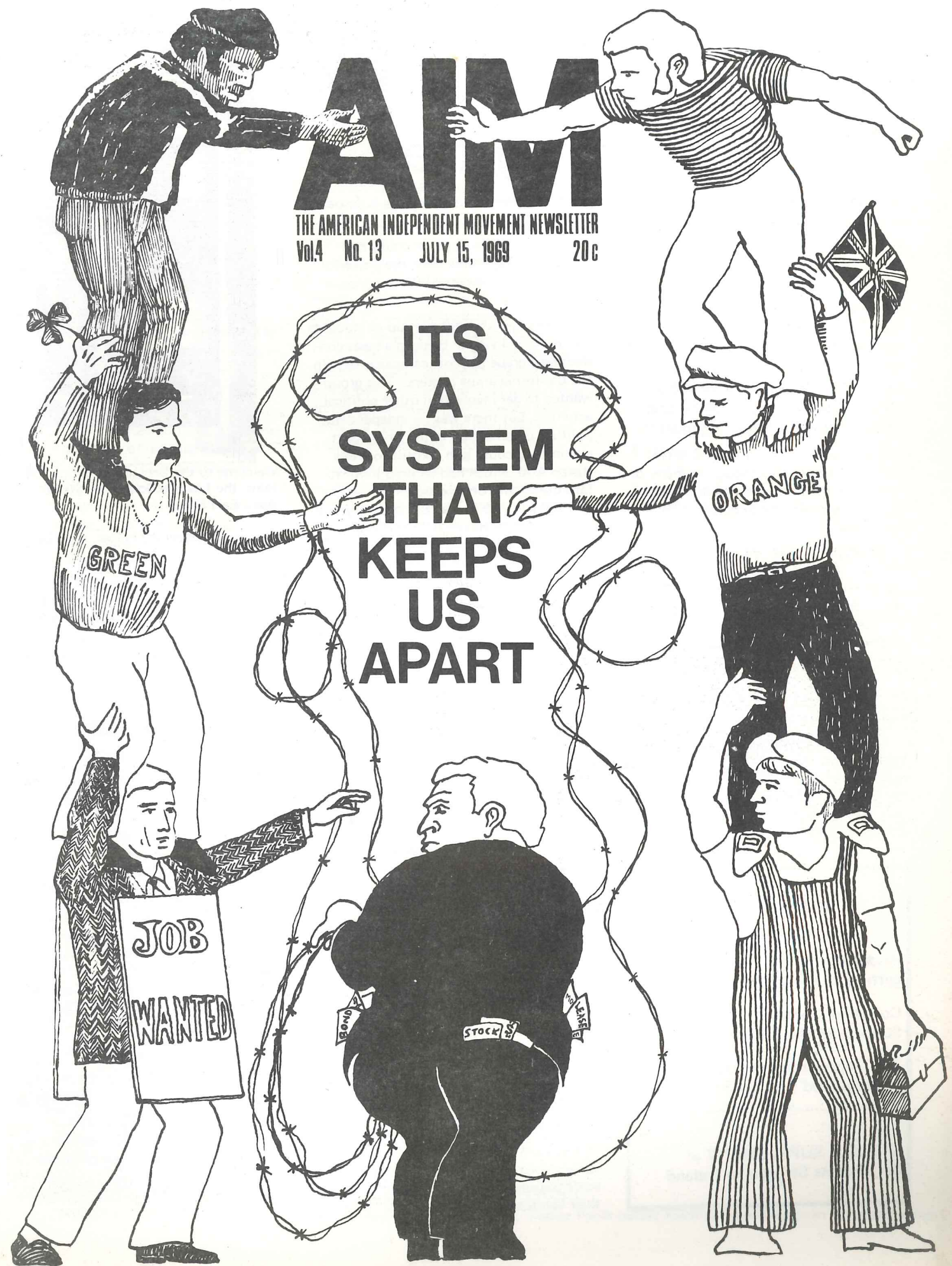


THE AMERICAN INDEPENDENT MOVEMENT NEWSLETTER
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**ITS
A
SYSTEM
THAT
KEEPS
US
APART**



Bridgeport AIM

Getting its Thing Together

by Alan McKnight

In a recent news story the Bridgeport Post quoted a University of Bridgeport official as saying "There is no such organization as Bridgeport AIM." Perhaps that was just wishful thinking. There is a Bridgeport AIM. We have not yet opened an office, but we already have plans for a long range fight against poverty, militarism, exploitation and racism in the city of Bridgeport.

Bridgeport is still the second largest city in Connecticut, although so many of its white families moved to suburbs that its population decreased between 1950 and 1960.

Bridgeport is also the most industrialized city in Connecticut. Much of its industry grew up during World War I and World War II, when Bridgeport called itself the "Arsenal of America." Nevertheless, unemployment in Bridgeport is high, in fact, double the national average, in those neighborhoods where blacks and Puerto Ricans moved into the housing vacated by the whites.

Bridgeport's two newspapers, like New Haven's, are owned by one conservative publisher who sees to it that new ideas do not receive wide circulation. The right wing is very strong in the city, the police are bigoted and hostile, the schools are up

tight, and the housing shortage is desperate.

But business is good, and city hall goes on taking orders from the powerful and wealthy members of the Algonquin Club.

In the Fall of 1968 a group of students and workers living in Bridgeport was conducting a grape boycott campaign to help the California grape pickers. This group wanted to get involved in other political activities, but there was no independent political organization in the Bridgeport region they could join, except for New Haven AIM, which had worked in Stratford during the Congressional campaigns of 1966 and 1968. The Bridgeport group contacted New Haven AIM and with AIM's help, developed a program something like New Haven AIM's but adapted to the specific problems of Bridgeport.

The Bridgeport group meets weekly to study and plan political organizing in the city. Our goal is radical change in the economic and political structure of Bridgeport, the building of a more humane and democratic society tied with the national movement for change, and a healthier and more stimulating culture and environment. Bridgeport AIM has a three pronged program aimed at high school youth, draft age youth, and working class people, employed or not.

We have isolated nine basic issues that we consider the highest priorities in the area and the issues that most effect the people we are trying to reach.

For high school youth:

1. High school student organizing.
2. The educational system.

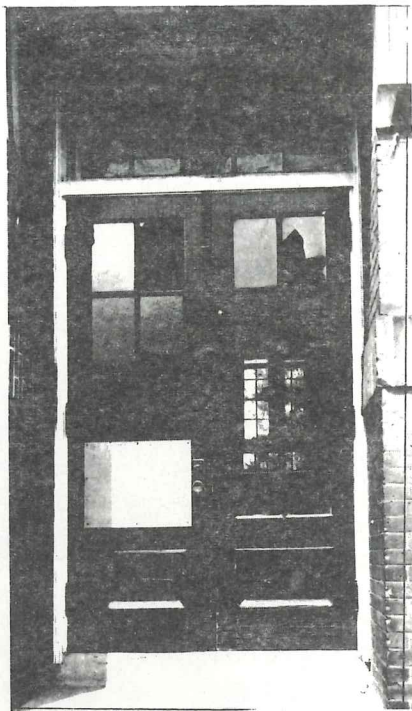
For draft age youth:

3. Draft resistance and counselling.
4. University control.

For working class people:

5. Jobs and production.
6. Housing.
7. Public transportation.
8. Air and water pollution.
9. Electoral politics.

For each of these issues we have studied and analyzed causes, and tried to involve ourselves in action that will lead to their solution. Some of our analysis and



Welcome to the Bridgeport School System: the Lincoln School on Stratford Ave., East Side.

actions are described below, issue by issue.

1. High school student organizing

High school students in Bridgeport are perhaps the most aware of how they are oppressed, but they are kept from organizing, because the knowledge and support they need to organize is kept from them, and they are isolated in scattered homes.

AIM planned to conduct a preliminary conference this Spring to bring students from Bridgeport, Stratford and Fairfield together to discuss and plan organizations of their own, but each meeting place we arranged for was denied to us when it became clear what we intended to do. Meanwhile, we continue to build contacts among the students.

2. The educational system

The Bridgeport school system is old-fashioned, stingy, authoritarian and unintelligent. It is as stifling in parts as Boston's and New York's, especially for minority groups and women. Teacher turnover is very high, and parents take little or no part in the education of their children.

AIM is compiling a critique of the Bridgeport schools and a plan for radical improvement.

3. Draft resistance and counselling

About eight AIM people have trained themselves to be draft counsellors and are already counselling while we continue to try to lease an office. There is no other source of counselling in Bridgeport.

4. University control

There are four colleges in the Bridgeport area: University of Bridgeport, Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University and Housatonic Community College. We have contacts at all four schools, and we have participated in radical actions at UB, Fairfield and Sacred Heart. For example, UB students recently took over Cortright Hall to demand housing changes, and Sacred Heart is in the process of restructuring the university after students and faculty rebelled against the administration. AIM is working with these students and attempting to broaden their political consciousness and sense of responsibility. We are also studying the growth of UB at the expense of residents and the subtle overtaking of higher education by corporate interests.

5. Jobs and production

Bridgeport receives more federal money than any other Connecticut city. It comes mostly in the form of defense contracts (\$650 million a year) to area industry. The consequences are complex.

— Bridgeport has felt less pressure to take advantage of federal poverty and redevelopment programs as a means of getting its share of federal tax money.

— The labor force is kept divided from the peace movement by its feeling of dependence on defense contracts. Over 30% of the area's 78,000 manufacturing workers work on defense. If defense contracts were cut back to the pre-escalation

level of \$300 million a year, 6750 people would be laid off directly, and 8775 more service employees would be laid off as a result of that. Anti-war sentiments are not popular.

— No substitutes for military production are being sought because the profit margin is so high and so secure.

— There are 6800 unemployed who are waiting to take the place of any worker who steps out of line. Workers are afraid to push for radical changes and they resent their unemployed brothers instead of resenting their bosses.

— The unemployed are concentrated mostly in the inner city's black and Puerto Rican neighborhoods, so that competition for jobs aggravates racial tensions.

— The federal employment program (CEP) is a very faint-hearted effort in Bridgeport. Industry and its biggest customer (government) profit when labor costs are kept down by the presence of a large surplus labor pool.

Bridgeport AIM is working on a long range plan to solve the labor problem. It involves three basic strategies. First, bringing the labor force together into a united front for demanding full employment, shorter hours and higher incomes for everyone. Second, making a success out of CEP by bringing the staff and the enrollees together (they tend to blame each other for failures) and exposing the foot-dragging of administrators. Third, encouraging the labor force to take con-

trol of the area's industry and convert it to production fitted to human needs.

AIM will also continue to support labor organizing efforts such as the grape boycott. We have had encouraging results in Bridgeport, getting A&P, First National and others to stop carrying grapes, and we have made new contacts on the picket lines.

AIM also has an active Women's Liberation chapter that is studying ways to combat discrimination and the stifling of women in the Bridgeport area—in unions, in sweat shops, in high schools, and in the women's prison.

Bridgeport AIM is seeking to form with other active groups in Bridgeport an anti-repression committee to insure that political organizers will get medical, legal and press aid if force is used to block their work. AIM sponsored a rally at a Bridgeport high school in support of the New Haven Panthers on Friday, May 23.

6. Housing

24.5% of Bridgeport lives in substandard housing. Overcrowding and housing code violations have caused several deaths. There are about 10,575 substandard housing units in Bridgeport today that must be replaced by low income housing since it is the low income families who occupy them.

AIM has joined the black and Puerto Rican community's movement to demand new housing, (see AIM Newsletter, May 1, 1969) which has promised to block con-



Bridgeport residents enjoy the use of a large network of recreational waterways. Father Panik public housing project is across the creek at right.

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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT
Civil Rights Struggle in Ireland



This fine view of the United Illuminating smokestacks was made possible by clearing over 544 homes for Rt. 25.

struction with sit-ins if low-income housing is not built. AIM also plans to work with the Bridgeport Housing Council and to investigate code violations and organize rent strikes.

7. Public transportation

Many jobs in the Bridgeport area are inaccessible to the poor who do not own cars. Bus service is absurd and the rail road hardly runs trains anymore. Bus and train fares have risen 200% since the government took to subsidizing airports and highways.

Meanwhile, the cars pollute the city's air and highways destroy needed housing (the new Rt. 25 demolished 544 standard units). The only solution is to transport people with fewer vehicles.

AIM and the Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency are the only voices calling for mass public transportation facilities for the city.

8. Air and water pollution

Bridgeport harbor was a beautiful natural resource that was turned over to industry for an open sewer. The poor live near the harbor and could use it for recreation and even sea food if it were cleaned up.

The major source of air pollution in

Bridgeport, as in other cities, is the automobile. Yet the redevelopment program so far has devoted federal funds to transforming downtown Bridgeport into a shopping center to attract suburbanites and their autos into the city. Meanwhile, United Illuminating, Carpenter Steel, Dictaphone, private dumps and incinerators add their more visible and smelly pollution.

AIM is planning a campaign against pollution that will show people why pollution cannot be controlled unless industry and land speculation are controlled.

9. Electoral politics

In the early nineteen hundreds Bridgeport elected a working class mayor. Later a self-styled "Socialist" held the office of mayor for 21 years beginning in the thirties, but no change came from it.

Bridgeport is a workingman's city, and the workingmen can elect their own kind of mayor, but that is not enough. If the people of Bridgeport can get together and get involved directly in political action, their goals will have a good chance of finally being achieved. Representative democracy has fallen short. Participatory democracy should be tried. If working class people received the full value of their labor, they could work shorter

hours and have time to govern, as only the rich have time to now.

The black and Puerto Rican leadership has expressed interest in using political power to bring about change. AIM is interested in this effort as it is in whatever the Bridgeport people undertake, and AIM is studying election procedures, voting blocs, party machines and the influence of wealth and corporations on the city's government. If electoral politics prove futile, AIM will at least be sure that these efforts are educational.

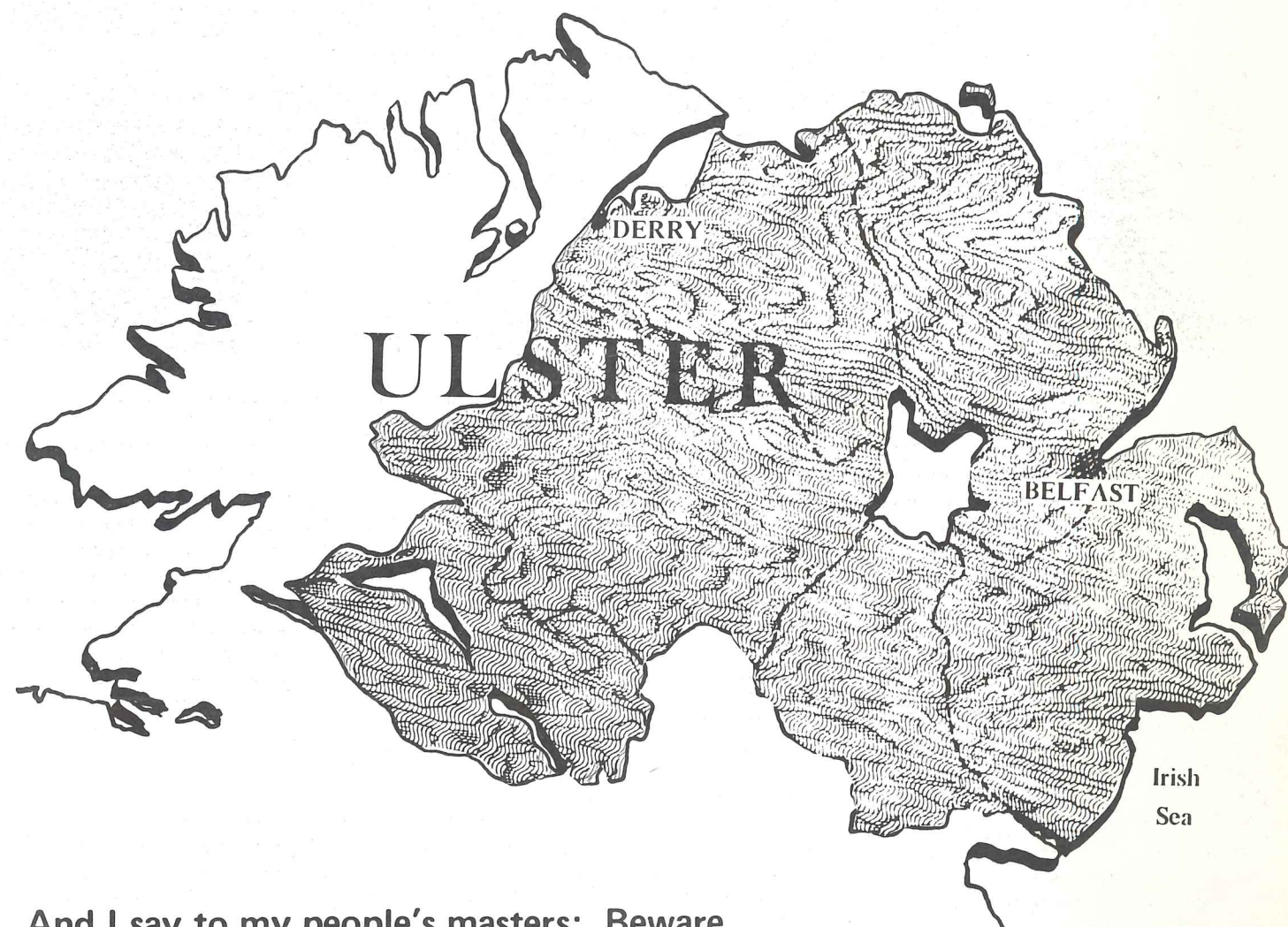
So far Bridgeport AIM has conducted its business in a member's home. Space for meetings and an office in a strategic location are not easy to come by. One landlord was persuaded by his lawyer that with AIM for a tenant, his building would be a target for a riot, and he refused to rent!

When an office is obtained, AIM will use it for draft counselling, co-ordinating, leafletting, keeping files, researching, recruiting and fund raising. The Newsletter will be the first to know Bridgeport AIM's new address and phone number; meanwhile inquiries may be made through the New Haven AIM office.

Civil Rights Struggle in Ireland

by Tomás Bolster, Dónal Hurley and Liam Keane

The authors are officers of the New Haven Committee for Justice in Northern Ireland.



And I say to my people's masters: Beware,
Beware of the thing that is coming, beware of the risen people,
Who shall take what ye would not give. Did ye think to conquer the people,
Or that Law is stronger than life and than men's desire to be free?
We will try it out with you, ye that have harried and held,
Ye that have bullied and bribed, tryants, hypocrites!

—Padraic Pearse

Ireland is in the headlines again. For the past year Derry, Belfast, Newry and other towns in the northeast section of the country have been featured several times in the world television and press. The reason: Northern Ireland (a British colony) is undergoing a civil rights struggle and a brutal reaction by a police force specially trained to keep "law and order" by any means.

Contrary to most reports in the U.S., the civil rights action is not a religious war, it is in fact an attempt by 40% of the population to achieve their rights systematically denied for many centuries.

Historical, political and economic reasons explain to the outsider what seems to be a fanatical intolerance on the part of the top men in Northern Ireland's Protestant population in relation to Catholic citizens.

About 40% of the population of 1,500,000 are Roman Catholic, the other 60% are Protestant. For the most part, the two communities live in a kind of apartheid atmosphere in distinctly separate areas. This separation is fostered and encouraged by the ruling class of Northern Ireland in order to maintain itself in power. Without exception, these rulers are members of the Orange Order, a semi-fascist organization for Protestants only.

A Movement Begins

A grass roots movement of Catholics and many poor Protestants has sprung up recently in Northern Ireland to fight against government sponsored religious hatred. The aims of the movement, led by The Civil Rights Association, include an end to religious discrimination and social injustice, a one man/one vote policy in all elections and the repeal of the hated



Derry street scene.



Rogues Gallery: Chichester-Clark (left), the new Prime Minister, is a leading light of the Orange order and the ruling gentry class. He owns a 560 acre estate near Derry where the average holding is 40 acres. Riding to hounds — "The gentlemanly sport" — is his favorite pastime. Rev. Ian Paisley (right), a Bible thumping fanatic, says "We will stop these Papists any way necessary". He received his religious education in Bob Jones University in the American south. This University is noted for its connections with fascist and KKK groups; groups which the Rev. Ian Paisley wholeheartedly supports.

Special Powers Act.

The Special Powers Act was and remains the main instrument of repression in Ulster. Under it the police may arrest anyone without a warrant and imprison him without charging him with a crime. The prisoner cannot obtain a writ of habeas corpus and has no right to see a lawyer; he has no right to a trial by jury, and if he dies, the police can prohibit the holding of an inquest. (One of the "concessions" promised by the government is the repeal of this last provision) Among those who are to be arrested are those who "by word of mouth" spread false reports or make false statements, or who do anything "calculated to be prejudicial to the preservation of peace or the maintenance of order in Northern Ireland and not specifically provided for in the regulations."

Police oppression, however, is not the only method of keeping control. In local elections the right to vote is limited to property owners. This qualification can give owners of shops and other businesses up to six votes for each business; this helps the propertied class and their friends maintain a majority on Town Councils and in the Central Government (Stormont). Housing is allocated directly by the Town council, whose members for the most part are rich Protestants who will not risk their majorities by housing Catholics.



Gerrymandering

In the three Northern Ireland counties where the Catholics are in the majority, control is denied to them by "gerrymandering." The city of Derry is a typical case. In the early years of the Stormont parliament there was a separate seat for the city of Derry which elected a Nationalist (Catholic) member because of the Catholic majority. To neutralize the seat the electoral boundaries were redrawn. The city itself was cut into two, in such a way that one area would elect a Catholic and the other a Protestant. The boundary of the city was stretched eight miles into the country to include pockets of Unionist (Protestant) voters, without reference to natural geographic features.

It is in the local government elections, however, that the "gerrymander" injustice is seen at its worst. One of the Derry electoral wards, wholly Catholic, has a population of 30,000 and elects eight members to the City Council. Two other smaller wards, while they have some distinctly Catholic streets, are mainly Protestant residential areas. With a total population of 24,000 inhabitants those two wards elect twelve councillors.

Because the Civil Rights Association activities brought the light of the world press to bear on Northern Ireland, the Stormont Government has recently promised consideration in 1971 of the demands for one man/one vote. Before 1971, however, various councils will have been

grouped into larger units and the boundaries of the enlarged councils will doubtless, where necessary, have been effectively gerrymandered. To secure justice in the new units of local government the minority would probably require one man, five votes.

The immediate source, then, of discontent in Northern Ireland can be traced directly to the discriminatory practices of the Orange Order and to their ruling political arm, the Unionist Party.

The Orange Order

In 1793, after a violent conflict between Protestants and Catholics in County Armagh a Protestant Orange society named after William of Orange was formed "to maintain the laws and peace of the country and the Protestant constitution." The Orange society spread its branches, called lodges, and by 1797 it had 200,000 members. During the early and middle years of the 19th century the movement fell into some obscurity; but when Gladstone declared in favour of Irish Home Rule in 1885, the Orange Order, as it came to be called, provided a core of resistance.

Today the Order is a semi-secret organization with a membership of 100,000. It dominates the entire political life of Northern Ireland. The membership includes a large proportion of prosperous farmers, skilled workers and professional men, while its inner sanctums are controlled by the propertied ruling class. There are lodges also for women and children. Some of the Order's police branches proudly call themselves "Cromwell's Ironsides."

Despite some apparent political differences between various important figures of the Orange Order such as ex-Prime Minister Terence O'Neill, William Craig, Prime Minister James Chichester-Clark and even Ian Paisley, they are all in agreement that the purpose of the Orange Order is still valid: it existed and still exists for the purpose of preserving a political and economic supremacy of the Protestant ruling class.

Divide and Rule

The traditional privileges enjoyed by this class would be lost if the Catholics and poor Protestants joined together to force a new political order. On this proposition there is complete agreement within the Order and any expectation of a split over this issue would be naive. James Craig said: "I have always said I am an Orangeman first and a politician and a Member of Parliament afterwards..."

all I boast is that we are a Protestant Parliament and a Protestant State."

To preserve their position of power the Orange order uses the old technique of divide and rule. The ordinary people of Northern Ireland are divided over the religious issue on which the Orange Order constantly expounds. Protestant workers are warned to beware of Catholic democracy, birthrates and standards of hygiene. For the first time since 1798 when Catholics and Protestants united to fight for their freedom, the Civil Rights movement today is uniting this same mass of people to fight for their rights.

One of their leaders, Bernadette Devlin, M.P., says of the Civil Rights Movement, "We are a movement of all the exploited people of Northern Ireland. The ruling party—the Unionist Party—uses religious differences to weaken the efforts of the common people to improve their lot. Religious bigotry is an excuse for the economic failure of the government."



Bernadette Devlin

Violent Repression

Two of the most militant opponents of the Civil Rights Movement are Ian Paisley and Ronald Bunting. Both have made no secret of the fact that they will hamper and harass the Civil Rights marches and demonstrations using "bully-boy" tactics which are reminiscent of the Nazi stormtroopers. Each time the Civil Rights workers have a demonstration they seek police permission. This is not always granted, but when it is the police do not protect the marchers from the Paisleyites who are usually armed. Sometimes the police actually help Paisley's storm-troopers. This was the case on January 6, 1969, when the police surged through some of the Catholic streets of Derry smashing doors and windows and assaulting men and women who tried to stop them. The response to a demand for an inquiry into this behaviour was to dispatch a high-ranking police officer to study the changes — a gesture not likely to restore confidence in the police among the people of Derry. The auxiliary police, the "B Specials", as they are called, have also been called up on

active duty. Almost all of these men are from the Orange Order; they get 48 hours training, are then armed with machine guns, and let loose on the people. In such a situation the Civil Rights groups have had to barricade sections of Derry to protect themselves from the police and Specials who had gone berserk.

HOW THE CONFLICT BEGAN

In the early 17th century Northern Ireland was the strongest source of resistance to English rule in Ireland. The year 1601 saw the defeat of the Irish rebels and shortly afterwards the Irish leaders fled to the European mainland. With the departure of their leaders the remaining Irish, helpless and undefended, were an easy prey to English colonists. Loyal English settlers were quickly "planted" on stolen land all over Northern Ireland and the lot of the Irish peasant was reduced to a level little better than that of a slave.

Some eighty years later, James II, a Catholic English king, was ousted by his countrymen and his crown was given to a Protestant, William of Orange. Like many an Englishman before him, James II decided to fight his battles on Irish soil, and enlisted the aid of the down-trodden Northern Irish. The decisive battle was fought at the river Boyne on July 12, 1689. James II was defeated and the English crown remained securely in Protestant hands.

The outcome of the war for Ireland was that English rule was more strongly entrenched than ever. The first half of the eighteenth century saw little change in the status quo. But things were soon to change as revolution was in the air in both America and Europe.

Wolfe Tone, who was greatly influenced by both the American and French revolutions, helped convince the Irish Protestants and Catholics to unite against British Imperialism. An army called the "United Irishmen" was formed to protect the country's interests. When the British were defeated in America they turned their attention once again towards Ireland in an attempt to regain some of their lost glory. As a result, in 1798 some of the Irish revolted. The rebellion was suppressed with more than the usual brutality.

The British government was dismayed at the alliance of all Irishmen, irrespective of their religious belief. The policy of playing off Protestant against Catholic was an obvious failure and had to be re-examined. First of all the British decided to tighten their hold on Ireland by taking all legislative power from the native Irish and transferring the government of Ire-

land to London. But more important, they wanted to make sure that Protestant and Catholic would never again unite in a common cause against them. To achieve this aim, policies were introduced which were intended to sow the seeds of religious hatred and in this they succeeded only too well. With the discontent of the less well-off Protestants turned against the downtrodden Catholics, the British Aristocracy was again free to take complete control of Ireland.

Home Rule

Throughout the 19th century the Irish were greatly concerned with the question of Home Rule. In simple terms, they wanted to regain their rights which had been taken from them when the power of governing Ireland was transferred to London. The Home Rule Movement was not very successful until the early part of this century, when the English Government promised some kind of self-government. Immediately there was a wave of protest in the North of Ireland. The leaders there, fearful of what might happen to their interests if they had to deal with an all-Irish Parliament, went so far as to threaten to disobey England and refuse to sever their ties with the English Parliament!

An army known as the "Ulster Volunteers" was formed to protect the "inter-

ests" of the North of Ireland. An English army, stationed in the South of Ireland, was ordered to march North and suppress the Volunteers. The army mutinied, refused to obey this order and no action was taken by the English Government against the rebel officers.

Some years later after a long and bitter guerrilla war the Southern portion of the country became independent and the North of Ireland remained attached to London. This was a profitable course for London, because the North was the most industrially and economically advanced part of the country at that time.

The Government of Northern Ireland has not changed in the intervening years. Instead of formulating constructive policies for the future, the Government is content to keep the forces of religious hatred going and to continue with the injustice of gerrymandering votes, tampering with the boundaries of voting constituencies, and the unfair allocation of jobs and housing. The Civil Rights movement is trying to change this situation.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE NOW?

As in previous struggles for justice, the people of Ireland are looking to their friends in the United States for assistance. American support has always been of the greatest importance to Ireland in its long

fight against British Imperialism. The Civil Rights Association of Northern Ireland has asked that their cause be made known to the American people and that funds be raised to assist them. Financial assistance is needed because civil rights workers are subject to job dismissal, fines, and heavy bonds. More important, however, is public opinion. It is hoped that the people of the United States can force the British government to set its house in order in Northern Ireland, for it is this government which is ultimately responsible for the present state of affairs. This responsibility is set out in detail in the Government of Ireland Act of 1920. The British have supported Northern Ireland financially since it was formed. Today this support amounts to 250,000,000 dollars per year.

With these facts in mind, groups supporting the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland have been formed in the U.S. In the New Haven area there is a Committee for Justice in Northern Ireland now being organized by the Irish community. People interested in the Committee should become members and help make the facts about Northern Ireland known in the U.S. Financial assistance should be sent to the Committee for Justice in Northern Ireland, P.O. Box 5044, Hamden, Conn. 06518.

U L A D H



Committee for Justice in Northern Ireland

P.O. BOX 5044, HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT 06518

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

NAME

ADDRESS Street City

State Zip

MINIMUM MEMBERSHIP FEE \$3.00

Plans Begin for Coalition To Support the

With summer heating up, the New Haven Panthers start their second month in jail. So far, twelve people have been arrested. Only ten, however, are in Connecticut.

Two of the accused, arrested in a mass raid of the Panther office in Denver, remain in jail there, where attorneys fighting their case report they will likely stay for up to six months fighting extradition back to Connecticut. (The other out of state arrestee, Lonnie McLucas, voluntarily waived extradition and returned to Connecticut after his arrest in Salt Lake City.)

Two of the defendants are under 16, and cannot under Connecticut law be tried as adults. One accused, named by the State as George Sams, remains at large.

The recent grand jury indictments are complicated. The State chose to split the indictments into two sets: 11 indictments charging kidnapping were handed down against all the adults by a secret New Haven grand jury meeting. In addition, the same grand jury indicted nine of the adults as accessories to murder. Another secret grand jury, meeting in Middletown, indicted three of the adults for murder (George Sams, Lonnie McLucas and Warren Kimbro). Each is also accused of several lesser charges, including conspiracy and binding with criminal intent. All are held without bail.

Attempt to Smash Resistance

To say that this is and will remain a political case overstates the obvious. Events so far show clearly that the authorities are using this case and the many others like it around the country to destroy the Panther organization. It is part of a nation-wide attempt outlined recently by the US Attorney General to break militant resistance by black and white radicals alike. Examples of this include

-The heavy publicity in the Register and the Courier (complete with mug shots and lengthy discussion of alleged "evidence")

-The extensive use of Federal warrants, (charging "flight across state lines") to

conduct a nationwide search (during which the Feds smashed Panther headquarters in Chicago and Denver and arrested everyone inside for harboring felons)

-Extensive use of Federal agents both locally and nationally to aid the local police

-Holding everyone without bail

-Segregating jailed Panthers in administrative isolation to keep them away from other prisoners

-Scattering the Panthers in four different isolated jails across the state (making communication with family and attorneys difficult even at best).

The authorities can be expected to make whatever political capital they can out of the case. Therefore, it is especially important that interested groups unite to free the Panthers, for if the state can successfully smash the Panthers in the courts, it will be that much easier to pick off other groups who oppose the status quo.

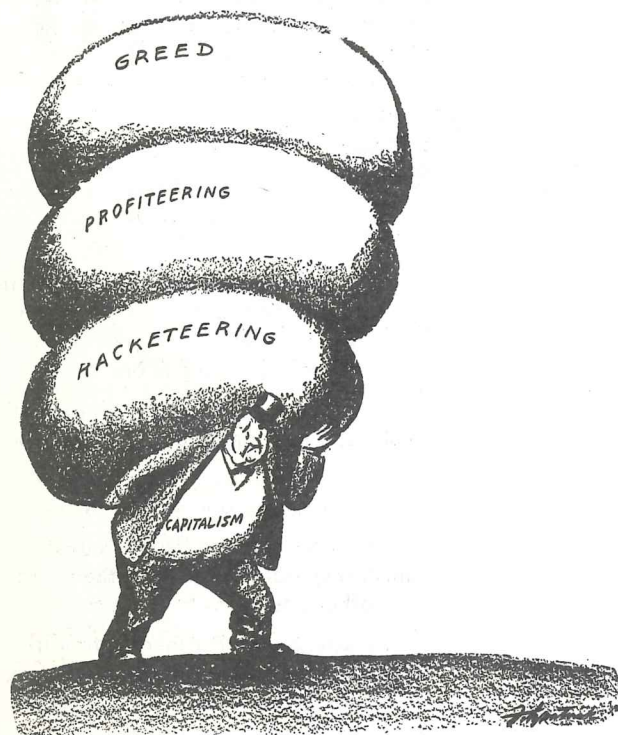
Defense Coalition Needed

Many groups, including AIM and the Black Coalition, are trying to form a coalition to Free the Panthers. Although the exact strategy has not yet been decided, this effort will include fund raising, and an educational campaign to show why the Panthers were arrested, why they are being treated differently, and why they cannot get a fair trial.

Freeing the Panthers will be a long and difficult fight. The arrest put the movement in a hole: in one stroke, the State immobilized its most militant black opposition and put both black and white communities on the defensive. Just as the eight movement leaders indicted by the Feds after the Chicago convention formed a support organization and called it The Conspiracy, we too must make common cause with our brothers in jail.

This case is only the first. There will be others, other charges and different defendants. Support must be mobilized, not only to Free the Panthers but to free ourselves.

PANTHERS



Fitzpatrick in the St. Louis Post-Despatch

TOO GREAT A LOAD FOR ANY SYSTEM



Fitzpatrick in The St. Louis Post-Despatch

ON THE OTHER CORNER

THE DEPRESSION LETS UP

Unemployed Cut Off from Workers

This is the last article in a series of three about organizations of the unemployed during the 1930's. Previous articles discussed mass actions taken by unemployed workers all across the country and the tactics and internal politics of the local organizations.

by Gail Falk

In spite of very serious political differences, nearly all the unemployed groups in the 1930's agreed on demanding a national Workers Unemployment Insurance plan. A federal bill to establish such a plan was introduced into Congress by Senator Lynn Frazier of North Dakota, and Congressman E.M. Lundeen of Minnesota. The preamble to the Frazier-Lundeen bill explained the philosophy of the program:

"Under modern economic conditions it is impossible for most workers to secure themselves against loss of income due to loss of work, for their earnings during

employment are barely enough to provide for more than immediate living expenses. This loss of work... is primarily due to the operation of social and economic forces which are beyond the control of individuals, private bodies, or individual states."

The bill provided for six categories of social insurance: for unemployed workers, for self-employed farmers, professionals, and small businessmen; for the disabled; for the aged; for expectant mothers; and for widows and mothers with dependent children. These payments would not come out of workers' pockets, but would be financed by increases in corporation, income, and excise taxes.

An important feature of the bill was a plan for worker control of the program. The insurance plan was to be run by a commission of representatives from labor unions, farmers' unions, and unemployed groups.

The Frazier-Lundeen plan was upstaged by President Roosevelt's plan for Social Security. The Social Security Act,

which was passed in 1935, provided for much less than the Frazier-Lundeen bill. For one thing, it had no plan for worker control. It divided relief into many different categories, (welfare, Social Security, unemployment insurance) to be handled by different offices. In addition, it was a regressive tax; it took money out of the worker's pay check, rather than the rich man's bank account. It failed to require a decent level of payments in the welfare programs, and welfare recipients today are still suffering from that lack. And it failed to set up national unemployment coverage, or establish national standards for unemployment insurance.

At the time, some people said the Social Security Act was a great victory, because it was the first time America has recognized responsibility for her poor. These people said that the unemployed groups should feel proud, because the Frazier-Lundeen (worker's) bill was in a way responsible for the Social Security Act's passing. They pointed out that Congress became receptive to the Social Security Act since it looked like a con-

servative measure next to the Workers' bill.

But the unemployed groups realized that the Social Security Act was a partial victory, at best, and they kept on pushing for the Frazier-Lundeen bill. However, they couldn't get Congressmen to see that it was still needed after the Social Security act was passed.

Most of the unemployed groups also made a big point of opposing discrimination in relief. The kind of discrimination varied from place to place. Much of it was anti-black, in the North as well as the South. A 1937 magazine article quoted the relief director of a New Jersey town explaining why he gave Negroes smaller allowances than whites. "Negroes are fitted by nature," he said, "to subsist on coarser fare than whites."

Yet the same article quoted the director of relief in a town 10 miles away who said he gave Italians less than he gave Negroes because "six Eytalians will live like kings for two weeks if you send 20 pounds of spaghetti, six cans of tomato paste, and a dozen loaves of three-foot long bread. . . . A good meal of meat would kill an Eytalian on account of he ain't used to it."

Many of the pamphlets and magazines of the unemployed stressed, through articles and pictures, cooperation between whites and blacks, and among different national groups. In New York City, members who favored one race over another were likely to be expelled from the groups.

In 1935, after years of rivalry, the major unemployed organizations — groups organized by the Socialists, the Communists, the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, and political independents — joined in one nationwide union: the Workers Alliance. In April, 1936, 900 delegates from 36 states attended a Workers Alliance unity convention. By the end of 1936, the Workers Alliance claimed 1,600 locals in 43 states.

In order to attract some of the more conservative groups, the Workers Alliance adopted a national program calling for reform, not revolution. It removed a provision from its constitution that had originally called for "abolition of the profit system."

On a national level the Workers Alliance lobbied for:

\$3 billion appropriation for work relief.

\$1 billion for direct relief at a "decent" level.

Jobs on public work projects at decent wages, under union conditions, with rep-

resentation of workers on policy-making boards.

A National Planning Commission to plan useful public works, such as low cost housing and flood control.

A 30-hour work week for industrial workers with no reduction in pay.

On a state level, they called for:

Repeal of sales taxes, to be replaced by corporation and excise taxes, and a tax on large incomes.

Exemption of small homes from taxation.

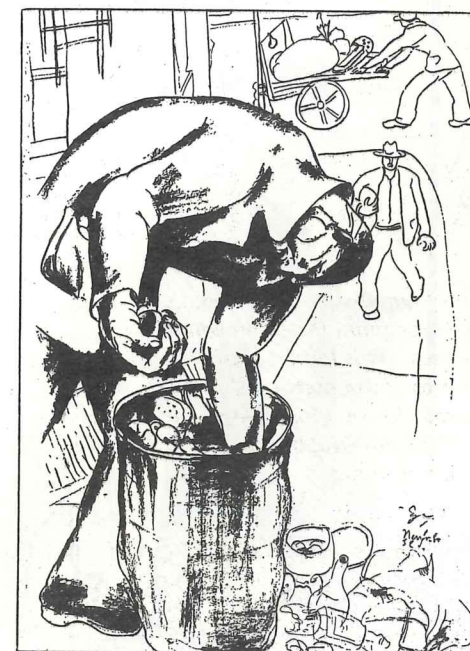
Laws prohibiting eviction of unemployed from their homes.

Housing and slum clearance program.

Repeal of anti-labor laws.

Abolition of child labor.

Many people hoped that the Workers Alliance would become a powerful organization to work for these goals. But the rivalries that had divided the poor into many organizations continued as bitter internal disputes in the national organization. The Workers Alliance established a lobby in Washington to represent the unemployed. Militant activity, however, continued to be centered in the



local groups, and — in some areas — at the state level.

There was a brief period of recovery in the mid-30's, but more suffering came before the economy turned up, and war mobilization created large numbers of jobs. In 1937 and early 1938 many Americans neared starvation. By this time the federal government was no longer contributing to general relief, and as the state legislatures bickered over relief appropriations hundreds of thousands suffered. Families salvaged food from garbage cans.

In New York City, Mrs. Sarah Goodman, the 60-year-old mother of a WPA worker, died of malnutrition and anemia. Chicago, where the relief rolls were up to 120,000 in 1938, closed down all 19 of its relief stations because the Illinois legislature had appropriated no money for relief.

In a few states, angry, hungry people went to confront their legislators. Several hundred people, calling themselves the Minnesota People's Lobby staged a sit-in for several days in the Minnesota Senate Chamber to demand a \$17 million appropriation for relief; the final appropriation was only \$11 million for a two-year period. In Ohio demonstrators occupied the governor's offices until they were finally evicted by police.

Workers Alliance members occupied the New Jersey capitol building in 1936 after licenses to beg were issued instead of relief. In Harrisburg hunger marchers camped out in the rotunda of the state capitol while the Pennsylvania legislature was deadlocked over relief appropriations. A reporter wrote, "Women are bathing their children under the dome, washing their clothes, and drying them on the statuary." The Pennsylvania demonstration did not succeed in getting relief payments raised, but it probably prevented a more drastic reduction than would have been made otherwise.

But in spite of these bursts of activity, the movement of the unemployed lost its momentum by the late 1930's. No one knows for sure what caused the effort to sag. Even less has been written about the organizations of the unemployed in the late 30's than in the early 30's, but apparently the groups declined even before prosperity returned — in 1941 there were still 6 million unemployed.

Many people have wondered why the unemployed did not form a revolutionary organization, and why the Workers Alliance died out. No one can answer those questions for certain until more work is done on the history of the movement, but some reasons can be given.

A problem that all the unemployed organizations shared was keeping their membership active. People tended to join up when they were having trouble with the relief office and then to drop out again when the grievance was satisfied until they had another difficulty. The self-help leagues tried to keep their members active by involving them in cooperative work efforts. Groups in New York formed housing committees to investigate Tenement Housing Law violations and work for low cost housing;

in Baltimore, the unemployed league managed 40 tenement buildings loaned by the Pennsylvania Railroad for housing relief clients. Most of the groups had some kind of educational and social program. None of these efforts, however, kept large numbers of people actively involved in the work of the organization over a long period of time.

The psychology of the Depression — people's attitude toward the social and economic conditions — must have had an important effect on the course of the unemployed movement, although

it is hard to figure out what kind of influence it had. Most poor people apparently thought that the Depression was a temporary emergency. The national leaders, like President Roosevelt, did their best to persuade people that prosperity was just around the corner, and most Americans seem to have believed this, even though the Depression dragged on for years.

Misery was not balanced at a constant level; there were periods of upturn that the believers could point to as signs of recovery long before recovery was actually a reality. This attitude is probably the

reason that most of the organizations of the unemployed did not call for a basic rearrangement of the economic or political structure, but only for reform.

It is possible that people were too depressed — both emotionally and physically — to do the kind of hard work and unrewarding effort that sound organizing requires. Fathers seeing their wives and children starving may have felt too desperate to refuse to scab or to take the chance of inviting the relief department's anger by participating in militant pressure group activity.

Most groups directed their anger against the local relief administration and workers. This was understandable; the workers often had a superior and snobbish attitude toward people on relief, and the relief office often acted in arbitrary or discriminatory ways.

However, the principal demand of the poor was more money, and relief workers had very little power to change the level of relief payments. The unemployed would have done better to bypass the relief office or form an alliance with the relief workers. This was done in some places, like New York City, where many relief workers were sympathetic to the unemployed. Nevertheless, most of the militant action by the unemployed in the 1930's was directed against relief offices. Except for scattered mass demonstrations and the actions at the state capitols, protest against men with political and economic power was orderly, polite, and reformist.

During the 1930's federal programs split the poor into many separate groups and destroyed the unity among poor people that was possible at the beginning of the Depression. At the beginning of the 1930's everyone who was poor was in the same boat — if they didn't get help from the local relief office, they had to fend for themselves. This gave strength to the organizations of the unemployed, for all the poor in a neighborhood had to deal with the same relief office and the same rules and workers. Federal work programs, such as the Works Progress Administration, split the poor into the employables and the unemployables. The Social Security Act split old people, disabled people, blind people and mothers with dependent children into separate programs, and set up a completely independent system — the Social Security Administration — to handle payments to people covered by Social Security insurance. Unemploy-

ment insurance started in many states during the 1930's. And the people who didn't fit the qualifications for any of these new programs still got assistance from the general relief office.

As these programs developed, the poor people in a neighborhood no longer met each other at the local relief office, no longer had the same workers to gripe about. The organizations of the unemployed had recruited most of their new members and held on to old members by grievance work; this required members who knew the rules and were in a bargaining position with the relief office. But as poor people came under the responsibility of the Social Security office or the Welfare Department or the State Employment office, a group that knew the relief rules didn't do them much good. In a few places, like Baltimore, the unemployed league began to help members apply for assistance from the Social Security programs. But most groups didn't have the resources or the skill to keep up with all the new government programs.

Workers on the federal job programs became organized in many places, but they did not always work together with the unemployed. One of the most serious effects of all the new federal programs was that they tended to make the different groups among the poor into rivals. Instead of demanding more money for all poor people, the way they had when all the poor were on relief, the unemployed who demanded more money for their particular program ended up fighting other poor people.

The draft and the general increase in the Armed Forces, in preparation for

World War II, took young men out of their communities and set them against a foreign enemy, just as the armed services do today.

Perhaps the most serious failure was that the unions of the unemployed and the unions of working men never really got together. The Communists, the first organizers of the unemployed, started the Trade Union Unity League, but the T.U.U.L. never gained much strength. All through the 30's the big labor unions, like the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O., talked about joining with the unemployed, but they did not form a strong partnership, except in a few places like Toledo and Minneapolis.

The split weakened both the labor unions and the organizations of the unemployed. The unemployed, desperate for a job, were used as scabs and helped break up many strikes. And in the long run, the split assured that the labor unions would become narrow interest groups, dedicated only to the short term interests of their members and leaders.

The unemployed organizations were weakened because most men lost their militancy and dropped out of the organization as soon as they got a job. The leaders of the unemployed groups tended to be the people with the most energy and initiative, and these also tended to be the people who were hired first when jobs became available. The unemployed groups were not successful in continuing as organizations of the poor after their members got jobs.

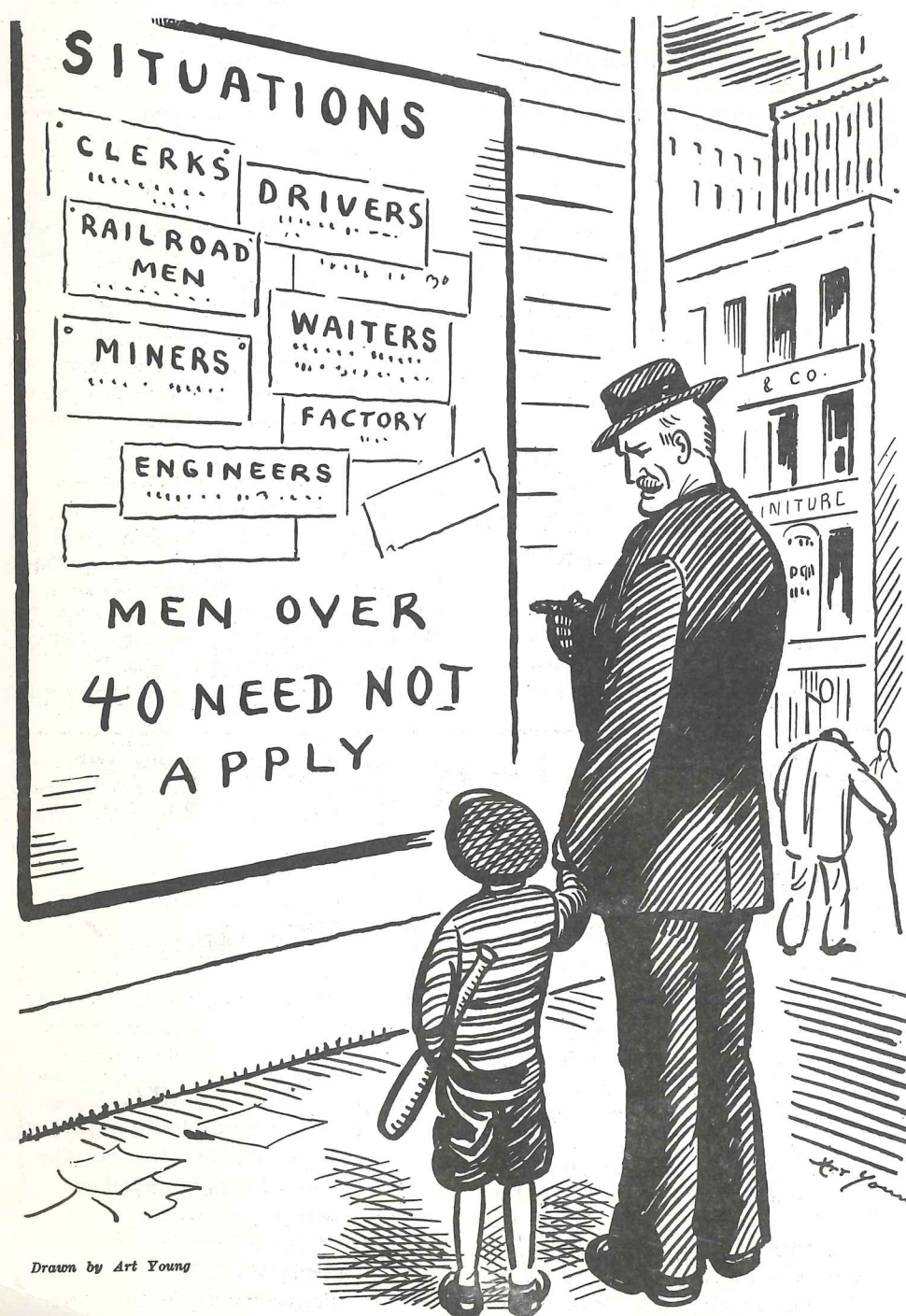
In addition, the unemployed groups could have only a limited success when they tried to use union pressure tactics

unless they were backed up by the labor unions. The people who controlled relief could afford to ignore the recipients to an extent that the owner of a factory could not afford to ignore the workers.

Many people who were out of a job in the 1930's never joined an unemployed group because they were ashamed to be identified with the poor. By working as separate organizations, the unions of the employed and unemployed helped continue the impression that workers and unemployed were two separate groups, instead of encouraging the idea that an unemployed man had no more reason to be ashamed than a man who was overworked on his job, that both employed and unemployed suffered because of a common enemy — the industrial system.

Sources used in this series:

Luchtenberg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal; O'Conner, Revolution in Seattle; Minton and Stuart, The Fat years and the Lean; Survey and Survey Graphic magazine from the 1930's; Brian Glick, "The Thirties: Organizing the Unemployed," Liberation, Sept. 67; ACLU's annual reports for the 1930's; ACLU pamphlet, "What Rights for the Unemployed?" Three masters theses were used: Brophy and Hallowitz, Pressure Groups and Relief Administration in New York City; Hillman, The Unemployed Citizens' League of Seattle; Seymour, When Clients Organize.



Drawn by Art Young

"I'M A HAS-BEEN AT 40, SON. I HOPE YOU HAVE BETTER LUCK."

GRAPHICS CREDITS

Cover	Alan McKnight
pages 2-4	Virginia Fortino
page 6 left:	The Unemployed, 1931, No. 4, p. 3. Published by the League for Industrial Democracy.
right:	The Unemployed, 1931, No. 4, p. 25.
page 7	The Unemployed, 1932, No. 5, p. 22.
page 8	The Unemployed, December, 1930, p. 22.

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—Alan McKnight

Whoever drew the line
between your house and mine
left a multitude of lines undrawn,
untouched and undefined.
The legal documents have fixed
this boundry in the mind,
and it doesn't matter
whether eight or nine
or seven hundred others
might be more dramatic
or ecstatic or sublime:
this is the line.

I counted nineteen
bodies strewn askew,
each one ripped open
like a can of stew,
marking with ooze
a line once chosen
from infinitudes
of possibilities.
The lines do not yield
to human needs.

If a line should waver
or collapse, alarms will
ring and sirens wail.
Men have lain in gutters
hours, for years in jail.
Only rats may still
consider lines
alternatives.



Armies muster,
march and murder,
but they never move a line.
It stays in the glazed
eyes of the woman
dragging her dead
child across a cratered
courtyard by the heel.
The new lines we create
only arm the old
with newer hate.

Trapped inside the lines,
we trace and trace and
never know how to erase.
We envy children
for their innocence of lines.
A hot June Wednesday,
wading in the capitol's
reflecting pool,
they showed a startled
land the shallowness
of its hallowed monument.
For some, lines yield
to love, but not for those
who guard the lines.

And we who made
the lines we made
stick hard and fast
by wiping out the minds
that could recall
the ancient lack of lines
have made our children be
the keepers of the lines.

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